



Baldwin County Mental Health Center withdraws request for letter of support

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The Baldwin County Mental Health Center has decided to move forward with its plan to merge with AltaPointe Health Systems without a letter of support from the county.

The center withdrew its request for a letter from the Baldwin County Commission in an email from Executive Director Robin Riggins on Monday afternoon.

The decision to withdraw the request came after a meeting Baldwin County Mental Health officials and others had with Commissioners Bob James and Frank Burt Jr.

The center isn't altering its incorporation articles as a result of the merger, so its position is it doesn't need a letter of support from the commission or its OK to merge.

"We all agreed if we don't have to there wasn't any need for it," Burt said.

Riggins could not be reached Tuesday for comment.

Baldwin County Mental Health is a public, nonprofit corporation that provides mental health services in Baldwin County. AltaPointe is a government-funded health care organization that provides mental health care services in Mobile and Washington.

As a result of the merger, Baldwin County Mental Health will be known as AltaPointe.

The commission on Tuesday was going to vote on whether to provide the letter and whether to amend a resolution so that tax money can go to AltaPointe.

The county collects a 10 cent tax on cigarettes, a portion of which goes to Baldwin County Mental Health. The center received \$4.8 million between fiscal years 2005 and 2013.

The commission didn't vote on the funding since the request for the letter was withdrawn. The commission plans to discuss the money at a future work session.

Questions were raised at last week's commission work session about the way Baldwin County Mental

Health was going about the merger.

Baldwin County Mental Health would have needed the commission's OK to change its incorporation articles since the commission appoints members to the center's board.

AltaPointe sought approval from the Mobile County Commission to amend its by-laws for the purposes of the merger.

Burt raised concerns about the merger during last week's commission meeting. He said his questions about the merger were answered during Monday's meeting.

James said if the commission had voted on the letter Tuesday, he would voted no.

"I just didn't have the time to do all the research I needed to on the subject," he said.

James said he still needs to do more research into whether AltaPointe should get the cigarette tax money.

"I just need a little more time," he said. "In two weeks, I may be 100 percent on board with it."

Commissioners Skip Gruber and Tucker Dorsey said they are OK with the merger and the cigarette tax money going to AltaPointe.

"I support it because of the good it will do for the people that it serves," Gruber said.

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